



State Representative • 3<sup>rd</sup> District

**Timm Ormsby**

## Keeping in Touch

Winter 2006

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

By the time you receive this brief newsletter, the 2006 Legislature will be well on its way to completing this year's 60-day session. My goals for the session are relatively simple. I will consider the session a success if we can:

- Make our communities and our children safer by enacting common-sense reforms in our sex-offender policies that are agreed to by parents, victims' advocates, prosecutors and law enforcement professionals;
- Improve our public schools, community colleges and universities, especially in the areas that will lead to employment opportunities at graduation;
- Expand access to and affordability of quality health care for every person in our state, at every income level;
- Maintain viable in-home care, allowing those in need to live with dignity and security;
- Help our city, region and state economies grow and create good, family-wage jobs with real benefits; and
- Safeguard the bulk of Washington's projected \$1.4 billion budget surplus, building up a prudent reserve as a hedge against possible service cuts or tax increases during economic downturns.

As I've said many times, both before and after becoming your representative in Olympia, I believe every public policy should have to pass a simple test. That test is, does it make Spokane – and Washington – a better place to live, work, and raise a family?

I'll keep asking that question this year.

In the meantime, please keep in touch with **your** questions, as well as your comments, suggestions and even your criticism. I work for you, and it's a great honor to do so.

Sincerely,

*Timm Ormsby*  
Timm Ormsby



### Committees:

Capital Budget (*Vice Chair*)  
Higher Education  
Housing

### Keeping in Touch

#### Legislative Office:

122F Legislative Bldg.  
Olympia WA 98504-0600

(360) 786-7946

(509) 458-2122

#### Toll-free Legislative Hotline:

(800) 562-6000

#### TDD Hearing Impaired:

(800) 635-9993

#### E-mail:

ormsby.timm@leg.wa.gov

#### Home Page:

<http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/ormsby/>

#### House of Representatives:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov>

#### State Web Page:

<http://access.wa.gov>

#### WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Looking Ahead
- Homelessness
- Capital Budget
- Fox Theater
- Bio-Energy
- Clean Water
- Transportation
- Education

# Rep. Timm Ormsby • 3<sup>rd</sup> District

## Keeping in Touch

### Looking Back, and Looking Ahead

One of the most-repeated lines of the year, about the legislative session, is one I never get tired of hearing: Washington's 2005 session was one of the most successful, most effective and most important in decades. That's what the reporters and editorial writers said. That's what citizens' groups and labor organizations and business leaders said. And most important, it's also what I've heard from my friends and neighbors. That's the review that really counts.

There were plenty of things that caused people to be so positive about the session's achievements. We passed a good, solid budget that insured more kids, improved schools, reached out to our most vulnerable citizens, and avoided cuts in crucial public services. We put together the biggest and most ambitious transportation-improvement act in more than 30 years. We wrote a capital budget that pumped millions into school construction and community improvements. We went a long way toward making Washington's elections system more consistent and user-friendly. And we did it all on time.

I'm grateful to have had a hand in several of these issues in 2005, and I'll talk a little bit about those victories here in this report. We can also look ahead a bit, to talk about what this year's Legislature is doing, or should do, to improve our state and the lives of its people.



## Ending Homelessness in Our Time

***"Tonight in Washington more than 25,000 children, women and men will sleep outdoors because they have nowhere else to go. Another 4,000 or so, the lucky ones, will find room in a shelter. In one of the richest states in the richest nation in the history of mankind, this simply should not be."***

That's how a fellow legislator and I began an op-ed column we wrote last year and distributed to newspapers around the state. We used that column to build awareness of the Homeless Housing and Assistance Act of 2005. I'm proud to have been the prime sponsor of this legislation, which will raise about \$10 million a year to move us in the direction of our goal: cutting homelessness in half within a decade. To raise this money, which will be used for a variety of anti-homelessness initiatives, including improved and expanded shelters, county auditors will assess a new \$10 fee when recording real-estate documents. In a sense, Washington's booming real-estate market will help some of our neighbors to move off the streets and find a warm, safe place to sleep.

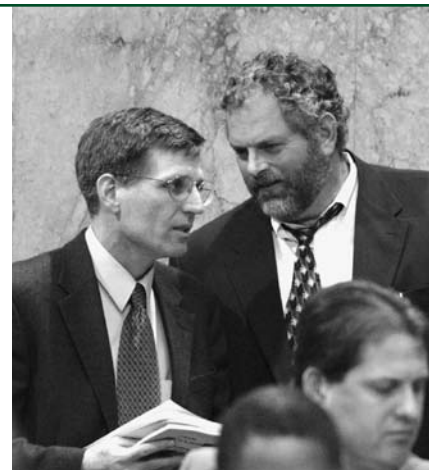
In what may have been my proudest moment so far as a legislator, the Washington State Housing Finance Commission presented me with its Friend of Housing Award during its annual meeting last fall. To be recognized by these fine people for my anti-homelessness work in the Legislature was very gratifying, and very humbling as well, considering all that they do, year after year. As I said at the time, *"We value people even if they don't have an address, even if they're not able to vote. We value people even if they're not able to*

*interact in an extremely meaningful way with the economy, spending a lot of money at the grocery store and the like. They're every bit as human and important as anyone else who's taking in air around here. I applaud the Housing Finance Commission for sharing that philosophy with me, and I'm deeply honored by this award."*

## Putting the Capital Budget to Work . . . For Us

As vice-chair of the House Capital Budget Committee, it was my pleasure last year to work with Chairman Hans Dunshee and other committee members to craft a document that has received widespread and bipartisan kudos. The capital budget this year invests a record \$600 million into school construction throughout the state. This is the best K-12 construction budget in state history. Our community's commitment to upgrade our schools in the last bond vote was honored and enhanced by the state. For the first

*Conferring on the House floor with Rep. Hans Dunshee, the Snohomish Democrat who chairs the Capital Budget Committee. Rep. Dunshee has been very responsive to Spokane's construction priorities.*



time in anyone's memory in Olympia, we spent more to build schools than to build prisons.

Here at home, \$49 million was earmarked for well over a dozen important projects, including the continued renovation of our historic Fox Theater, the Whitewater Gorge Park, the Northeast and West Central community centers, the Mobius Science Center and Mobius Kids, a number of agricultural and ecological projects, and a whopping \$31.6 million for the WSU nursing education building at the Riverpoint Campus (this is in addition to the previous year's \$31.6 million for the academic center at Riverpoint).

This is money that translates directly into good jobs, now as well as far into the future. A study conducted by the University of Washington tells us that we're creating 31 new jobs with every million dollars that we invest in this type of construction. Using those numbers, our current capital budget could provide work for many hundreds of 3rd district residents. Every good job makes a family more secure. It makes our community's economy stronger. And it makes our city a better place to live.

## Homegrown Energy

Too many of our hard-earned dollars go off-shore to purchase the oil and gas we need. I realize we live in a global economy; there's no getting around that fact. But every energy dollar we can keep here at home can multiply itself many times over in our local economy. That's why I've been such a strong supporter of measures to jump-start Washington's fledgling biofuels industry. Whether our farmers grow the crops to produce ethanol or biodiesel, the results are the same: cleaner air, a healthier economy, more successful farmers, and good jobs in the plants where the raw materials are turned into clean-burning biofuels.

I'm not naïve; I realize that even if we invest plenty of resources in alternate energy sources now – whether they be biofuels or wind-generated electricity or solar energy – it will be years before we as a state can achieve anything approaching true energy independence. But we'll never get there if we don't start moving in that direction.

## Clean Water

I'm sponsoring a bill this session to finish an important job we started decades ago, when we banned the use of phosphates in laundry detergent. At the time, nothing was said about phosphates in automatic dishwasher soaps, in part because there were fewer automatic dishwashers than clothes-washing machines, and the amount of detergent used was so much smaller. Today, however, we're choking our rivers unnecessarily. That's exactly what phosphates in the water do, by the way: They reduce the dissolved oxygen levels, slowly but surely suffocating both fish and vegetation. Unlike a few decades ago, there are effective detergents on the market that don't contain phosphates, so my bill won't be condemning us to dirty dishes. When it comes to protecting our rivers and aquifers, it's important to remember that we didn't inherit these resources from our ancestors, we're borrowing them from our descendants.

## New Life for the Fox Theater

As I mentioned, the Fox Theater renovation received key funding again this year in the capital budget. The \$2.5 million this time around brings the total state funding over time to more than \$4 million to polish this cultural landmark. The Fox opened in 1931 as one of the finest movie palaces in the world, and in years since has played a major role in the hearts and lives of moviegoers and music lovers from throughout Eastern Washington. The Fox had seen better days by the end of the 20th century, when it was bought by the Spokane Symphony and launched on a multi-million-dollar renovation project.

I'm sure most people don't know that I worked as a doorman and custodian at the Fox for several years between 1977 and 1983. I love the history, the architecture, and the culture. I also love the paychecks it will mean for many hard-working people over the years of its renovation, and many more years after that. The 1931 photo below shows the Fox Theater in its glory. I wish I also had a photo during the original construction that showed all the hard work that went into building the Fox, and the difference those jobs meant to families all over Spokane.



Photo courtesy of the Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture, Libby Collection

## Transportation: Getting Washington Moving Again

Much has been written about the \$8+ billion transportation act written and passed last session. Unlike many things the Legislature does, this one was put before the people for an up or down vote just this past fall. The people spoke, and what they said was, "Fix our roads, fix our bridges, give us new highways, and take care of the accidents that are just waiting to happen." That's exactly what is happening, throughout our city, our region, and our state. More than \$200 million for the North-South Freeway and to replace the Trent Street Bridge. \$15 million to resurface the downtown viaduct. New guardrails on I-90. Improved on- and off-ramps for increased

# Rep. Timm Ormsby • 3<sup>rd</sup> District

safety. Potholes filled here. Medians there. The fact is, we're doing just fine under the transportation project plan worked out by the Legislature last session — and we'll receive nearly \$400 million over the next decade to make our roads and bridges safer, smoother, wider and sturdier.

## Being Smart About Education

As I see it, the Legislature has three primary education goals we need to either achieve, or position ourselves to achieve in the full-length 2007 session.

- We need to strike a balance on the WASL requirements. Standards are important, and our high schoolers need to graduate with the tools to succeed. On the other hand, we need to make sure that our boat has room for everyone by ensuring high graduation rates and preparing our classrooms to teach all students.
- We need to make Washington's early learning environment the best in the nation. I believe we're already close on this one, and that we can take that next step by consolidating the state's numerous early learning programs under one umbrella. We need to marshal our resources in one place and establish consistency throughout the state. Our kids will thank us one day.
- And finally, we need to continue the important push to provide as good an education for non-university-bound students as we do for our budding scientists, computer whizzes and aerospace engineers. It is vital, of course, that our degree-granting universities maintain and increase their acknowledged excellence. But it is just as important to value technical education as highly as we do purely academic pursuits. Gov. Gregoire's is supporting what she calls "Running Start for the Trades." This is very encouraging. I've been working since I came to Olympia to increase funding and respect for our outstanding public high-school-level skill

centers. I was honored to receive the Washington Association of Career and Technical Educator's "Legislator of the Year" award.

## There's More – Lots More

It's a short session, and I mentioned a few key goals . . . but the fact is, like every year, we have our plates full. In addition to everything I've mentioned, my Democratic colleagues and I are committed to strengthening our state's sex-offender laws by crafting reforms that increase the chances that every offender will do significant prison time. Over the course of the debate, you'll hear a lot



of bumper-sticker rhetoric, but tough words don't make our families safer. I promise to support reasoned policy that has the approval of victims' advocates and those on the front lines protecting our children.

We've already passed legislation to provide home-heating assistance to low-income families throughout the state, including right here in the 3rd district. We're going to work to expand access to good medical care for uninsured kids and families, and we've got to try, once again, to put reason and balance into a medical-malpractice situation that has gotten unnecessarily politicized. Our goals should be relieving pressure on our practitioners without trampling on individual civil rights.

There's more. There's more of everything, in fact, except space in this newsletter. I'll be in touch again soon. Until then, I'll be working for you, and I would welcome your input.

Keeping  
in  
Touch

 Printed on recycled paper

P.O. Box 40600  
122F Legislative Bldg.  
Olympia WA 98504-0600

**Timm Ormsby**  
State Representative

PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Washington State  
Department of Printing